

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method, system, apparatus and computer program product are disclosed for screening electronic messages, wherein a sentry determines whether electronic messages to a receiver include respective passes from the receiver. Responsive to such a message having a pass, the receiver is notified about the message. Responsive to the message not having a pass, a notice for the sender is generated about a pass for the message. Ultimately the pass is generated and sent, on behalf of the designated receiver of the message, to the sender. Unless the sender of the electronic message receives the pass which was returned to the sender by a screening agent for the designated receiver, and the sender returns the pass to the receiver, then the screening agent discards the message and the receiver will not ever be burdened with the message. Thus, if the sender's message has an invalid electronic message reply address, as is frequently the case for mass marketing senders, the sender will never receive the pass, and the receiver's screening agent will discard the message. Both the pass generation and sender notification may be without regard for the identity of the sender. That is, responsive to every message for which the screening agent has not already generated a pass, the recipient's screening agent automatically generates a pass and sender notification. Therefore, no significant burden is placed on the designated recipient even to merely set up rules for screening messages.